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J. Hamilton Gray Esq

GENERAL REMARKS

St. Johns. N. B.

ON

STEAM COMMUNICATION,

WITH REFERENCE TO

THE UNITED KINGDOMS

AS

THE CENTRE.

BY T. KNOX FORTESCUE.

DUBLIN :

SAMUEL J. MACHEN, 28, WESTMORLAND STREET.

1845.

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TO THE READER.

SOME portion of this small pamphlet has already appeared in the Malta papers, under the title, "Malta considered with reference to steam communication between the United Kingdoms and the East."

In this partial reprint, I have omitted all that was solely applicable to Malta, and have offered some remarks upon these countries, whence all lines of steam navigation may be said to originate.

Although this little *brochure* has had the benefit of a revision, yet I cannot pride myself much upon my success. The intelligent reader may see many faults, and some errors, and may even think that the whole should be re-written; but my object is to convey an idea, not to aim at perfection in style. If I succeed in the former, I shall with pleasure leave to the reader the correction of the latter.

DUBLIN, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1845.

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REMARKS.

IN the following pages I propose to give an outline of the progress of improvement, in the means of communication generally, as well as regards the transmission of intelligence throughout our own country, particularly as connected with Great Britain. And in order that we may come at the matter as directly as possible, and at the same time give to Ireland the first consideration, I shall observe that within the last seventy years, the different modes of intercourse with distant quarters have undergone a complete revolution, as many persons now living can bear testimony. The march of improvement, in this respect, commenced towards the close of the lives of our grandfathers, about the time that universal war had nearly worn itself out, and before it finally expired upon the plains of Waterloo. The establishing of lines of mail coach by the Government, and other regular conveyances by a few enterprising foreigners, as well as natives, I regard as the first breaking of the ground, as it acted on, or caused the minds of men in this country to be acted upon, by facilitating the communication between them; and brought them to know and to feel more for one another, by a closer acquaintance with their mutual wants and necessities. The principle of mutual intercourse thus commenced, has continued to be systematically acted on by their successors, inasmuch as steam navigation to the sister countries has, within the last twenty years, so effectually gone to windward of the old style of doing things afloat, while railroads, in other parts of the United Kingdoms, have so far progressed in displacing the dapper four-horse coach on terra firma, that the "cannie skipper" of the sailing packet, and the long coachman, may, if properly stuffed, be considered as almost worthy of holding places in the collection of antiques, at the British Museum, or in any other old curiosity shop. With a glance at the past, it may prove satisfactory to us of the present day, if we try to draw a reasonable deduction as to the future; so without being aware that the important position which these countries hold, with respect to

steam communication with America and the East, or as the radiating point of a universal system of steam, has ever been put forth prominently to your notice, at least in such a form as this which I now propose, I shall endeavour, as concisely and lucidly as possible, to represent the case, and feel sufficiently well assured, that any slight error, or errors, which the superior knowledge of parties, or individuals may, from time to time, herein render apparent, will be permitted to pass with all kind consideration.

Letter A space of sixteen or seventeen years has proved sufficient to make railroads the highways of England; while as regards Ireland, the case has been very different; she having been always, by reason of short-sighted domestic policy, and of sycophantic capitalists, a step or two behind her elder sister in the march of physical improvement. In fact, until three or four years ago, there was not such a thing known as an Irish railroad, if we except the diminutive line from Dublin to Kingstown. Now, indeed, the country seems to be in a fair way to place itself upon an equality in this respect with others, and in the course of a year, there will be upwards of one hundred miles of new railroad, in different directions, radiating from Dublin, while the finally establishing of a packet station in the county Kerry, for vessels to America, seems pretty certain, and is of a surety the natural right of this country. Steam navigation, however, has been in a comparatively flourishing state for some time, between the ports of Dublin, Cork, Belfast, and those of the sister isle; for about twenty years since, a small company started a couple of steamers to run from Dublin to Liverpool and London; and to these, in consequence of the increase of trade, and opposition which forthwith ensued, they added three others; but these five proving to be too many for the then existing trade, two of them were removed to a new line projected a short time previous, i. e. the present Peninsular line, as far as Gibraltar. Other steam companies meanwhile established this improved mode of conveyance between the eastern ports of Ireland, and those of the western coasts of Great Britain; but this which I now speak of claims particular attention, as it is that of which I may almost say the Oriental line (reaching from Southampton to Alexandria, on the European side of the African isthmus, and in Asia from Suez to Hong Kong) is but a continuous branch. To an indomitable spirit of enterprise alone, on the part of a few talented men—most of them, I believe, natives of this country—whose perception and resolution set almost overwhelming adverse circumstances at naught, the present prosperity of the most stupendous scheme which modern speculators ever conceived, is

owing : the British government, seeing the great advantages to be obtained by the speedy transmission of the mails throughout the Mediterranean, proposed a contract with this company for the conveyance of them, and stipulated at the same time for their extending the line as far as Malta and Alexandria. To this end, the company built a couple of large steamers, but unfortunately one of them, the finest and most powerful steamer then afloat, was totally wrecked on her first, or second return voyage, the effect of which proved nearly a death-blow to the company. However, about this time the Overland route to India was projected, and a British American steam company, finding that the trade with the United States would not repay the expense of the large vessels which they had in employ, effected an arrangement with the Peninsular Company, and forthwith these two companies became incorporated under their present title of "The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company," which now monopolizes the whole of the route from these countries to the eastward, and presents to the speculator an opportunity for pecuniary investment equal to any, and superior to most others. In the present day, similar effects, as regards the expanding of the one principle of progressive improvement, seem to be produced—though as secondary results, if we take for granted that the various publications on these subjects influence the minds of individuals, in the first instances ; and this mode we may look upon as being the best and surest—as being the legitimate means of producing a lasting, and at the same time an improved order of things.

Hitherto, Ireland,—an island in size and resources, nearly equal to one-half of the United Kingdoms,—notwithstanding the changes around her, has continued in a most wretchedly disorganised and impoverished condition, while the sister countries have as surely enjoyed the opposite extreme. She has, in short, through ignorance, carelessness, or wilful contempt, been either wholly overlooked, or regarded by all parties, those of her own people included, with a comparatively negligent eye. We may, indeed, reasonably enough infer, that *Ireland's day has yet to come* ; from her people have sprung in every age, the master spirits of the earth ; and among our countrymen of the present day are to be found in all the higher branches of learning, arts, and arms, minds of sufficient capacity, I may almost say, to compass space ; powers of perception that would penetrate eternity ; and therefore, if the elements of our own improvement exist in nature, which I trust few will be found to doubt, they must and can exist nowhere else so pre-eminently as in the people of this country. The persuasion that such is the fact, may in a

great measure supersede all doubts as to its probability, when we reflect on her having been so long in a state of agitation, in which she must inevitably continue, so long as her political relation with other countries is no better than a negation; or while the moral condition of her people, as individuals, remains an illustrated satire upon reason and common sense. Nor, indeed, is it in any way desirable that effects produced should be otherwise, so long as the cause of them remains; since imperfection in the policy of nations, as communities, being radically the same as when found in the morals of individuals, different results could in no way tend to our ultimate perfection, either physically or mentally, which is to be the end, as it was the beginning of all creation. It was never intended by nature that the people of Ireland should be placed in so low a grade as the second even, much less that they were to await justice at the hands of a government who care but little, and know still less about them; and though union there is, and must always be, it should be that of equals, and not the forced contact of the worm with the hoof which crushes it. Equality, at the least, is our national right in common with all other nations, and this we must and will obtain eventually, at whatever cost, whether to us as a body of individuals, or to other nations, or to all parties combined.

To return from that which may be regarded by the general reader as a digression merely, and to make my theme as perspicuous in its several branches as I possibly can, I shall refer you to the general chart of the world,* and it will be at once apparent on the most casual inspection, that the three kingdoms occupy the central position, take it in whatever sense we may, of "the habitable," "the commercial," or "the civilized world."

Considering it in the first sense,—if we look to the latitude, we see that the Southern hemisphere is composed of nearly all water, when compared with the Northern hemisphere; and in point of population, which is the principal, or most worthy view to take of it, the importance of the former bears but a small proportion to that of the latter, where the United Kingdoms are situated in, as near as possible, a middle latitude, with a medium or temperate climate—in short, one sees, that "the United Kingdoms" form the centre of the world peopled as it is at present.

Secondly, that they form the focus of "the commercial world," *is felt* by persons in business, of all ranks and throughout all nations of the globe, who have an idea of what buying or

* Mercator's Chart, as published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, is the best, as in it the meridian of Greenwich is the centre.

exchanging is; and from the wisest stroke of policy, or the deepest laid plan of the foreign politician, as regards his relations with neighbouring powers, down to the petty, peddling traffic of the second or third-rate shopkeeper in a colony, who obtains a livelihood by turning—it may be—at most, a diurnal half crown, events in the United Kingdom serve as the standard whereby to regulate, and as the mainspring to give life and action to the whole.

Thirdly, and lastly in order, though by no means the last in place, they form the centre of “the civilized world.” Commerce and civilization are, for the most part, said to accompany one another, and therefore to be synonymous terms; but such is not always to be taken for granted, inasmuch as there are found to be many places where, while commerce has been made to flourish, the mental or moral condition of THE PEOPLE is either wholly neglected, or cultivated only so far as to leave them in that half civilized state which is in its effects almost worse and more difficult to be reformed than absolute barbarism itself. It will be well therefore, to make a distinction in the present case, by considering the prosperity and enlightenment of “the United Kingdom” as effects arising from her constitution and government, which, different from those of all other nations, are based upon essentially anti-papery principles, and on freedom of opinion amongst her people; and thus, as sure as a reasoning process is correct, we shall find her placed, as the radiating point of civilization to the whole of the known world. Most people who have given any of their attention to the matter, will be ready, I doubt not, to admit the merits of her Bible and Missionary Societies (the true instruments of civilization), to be far surpassing those of all the rest of the other nations put together, whether we consider the scale upon which their operations are being carried on, or the measure of effect produced by them.

I have, I hope, succeeded in shewing, how that the United Kingdoms form, in three distinct senses, the focal point of the world, which for present purposes, we may regard as being composed of TWO LARGE ISLANDS ONLY—Europe, Asia, and Africa together, forming one; the two continents of America forming the other; to these perhaps might be added, that of Australia, but it will be quite enough if we merely look upon it as a part of Asia; (as for the lately discovered Antarctic continent, as we have not yet heard much of its inhabitants, we may let it lie by till some future day). In times of universal peace, as far as the United Kingdom is concerned, the ocean is common to all, as the legitimate highway of nations, until the reverse of circumstances

is brought about, when it then becomes the private property of "the United Kingdoms."

Steam is now being made the universal agent of communication from one end of the earth to the other; and in this, "the United Kingdoms," as in every thing else that is worth attention, take the lead; they form the radiating point of steam navigation to every land, where railroads then become the lineal continuations; as is the case in America for instance, to which if we turn our attention for a moment, we find one line of steam navigation to Halifax and Boston, and another to New York direct, whereby a friendly and speedy commercial intercourse is kept up between the mother country, the Canadas, and the United States, while from the two last seaports lines of railway diverge in all directions, north, south, and west, and in a measure annihilate time and space by bringing, as it were, the back settlements to the very verge of the shores of the east. A little further to the southward again, the line of the West India Steam Company stretches like the huge artery of some mighty leviathan, across the bosom of the Atlantic, causing, within the short space of three weeks from the date of departure from Europe, the latest intelligence to be disseminated throughout each of the individual islands of the vast group of which the West Indies is composed. It would appear, however, that no more than one half of this line is as yet completed, for the Mexican isthmus has yet to be overcome and traversed by steam, so as to open a communication with the Pacific, either by means of a ship canal, as has been lately proposed, or by a railroad—the former, if found to be practicable, would perhaps be the more preferable plan of the two to adopt, as vessels bound to the southern seas from the eastward, would thereby be saved a circuitous, and at some periods of the year, a dangerous passage of some thousand and odd miles, round Cape Horn. The transit once effected, would also open up a new line of coast of some thousand miles in length, from Valparaiso to Nootka Sound inclusive, for steamers to ply on, in connection with those of the West India Company in the Atlantic. Along the eastern shores of South America, steamers have some time since made their first appearance; and the line will of course, in due time, extend, and join in with that to the northward.*

* In a short time the line from Liverpool to Rio and the River Plate will commence operations. British enterprise has now established steam communication with the following countries:—To Russia, Sweden, and Denmark, by the Hull line, to St. Petersburg; to North Germany, by the Hull and London lines to Hamburg; to Holland, Belgium, and France, by the General Steam Company's

If we look to the eastward, we see the "Peninsular and Oriental Company's" line already extended as far as China; much further in that direction, it may not at present seem probable that it will go, as the wide expanse of the North Pacific Ocean lies beyond, while on each side, among the islands in the Indian and Chinese seas, there seems to be a field opening for the advantageous outlay of surplus capital, and for the formation of exclusively East Indian steam companies. Under such a state of affairs, the island of Ceylon, which hitherto has been comparatively but little known, must inevitably come prominently before us, as the centre, or depot of steam in the Indian seas; its favourable situation is of itself almost sufficient to make any one arrive at this conclusion—just at the entrance of the Bay of Bengal, directly in the middle almost of the "Peninsular and Oriental Company's" Indian line, and presenting a point whence lines of steam navigation may radiate to nearly all points of the compass. It is moreover, a remarkably fertile island; offers many advantages to European settlers, and possesses, at least, two good harbours—that of Gallé, on the southern coast, and that of Trincomalée, said to be one of the finest in the world, on the N.E. shore.

Gallé presents itself as the port of call for the "Oriental Company's" steamers plying between Suez and Hong Kong direct; and consequently, as a town and harbour, is likely to improve rapidly in many respects. If, however, instead of these steamers merely touching there, and then proceeding to Madras, Calcutta, and China, there were steamers established at Trincomalée, in connection with those of the Oriental Company's, to ply thence to the several ports in the Bay of Bengal, those heavy steamers would then be enabled to save time and fuel, and expense, while making good the shortest distance between Suez and Hong Kong. Let us now suppose a railroad to be constructed, as is proposed, between these two ports, and the feasibility of the above plan, becomes evident at once; the whole distance is not above one hundred and twenty or thirty miles at the greatest;

vessels; to the north and south of Spain and to Portugal, by the Peninsular Company's vessels; to Italy, by the new line from London to Leghorn; to Malta, the Levant, and Constantinople, by the new line from Liverpool; to Egypt, Arabia, Ceylon, India, Singapore, and China, by the Oriental Steam Company's vessels; to British America and the United States by the Cunard and Great Western lines from Liverpool; to the West Indies, Mexico, and the north coast of South America, by the West India line; to Peru and Chili by the West Coast line. To Brazil and the River Plate by the line now building in Liverpool. The only British Colonies of any importance which have not now the advantage of steam communication with the mother country are the Cape, the Mauritius, and Australian Colonies.—*Liverpool Times*.

labour throughout the country is remarkably cheap, and most of the materials requisite for the work, are to be procured in more than abundance along the projected line, which passing by Kandi, the central town, and capital of the island, would leave it about five and twenty miles to the westward; and ultimately a branch might be made to diverge there to.

Should the expense, or the natural difficulties to be overcome in the course of the work, however, be raised as objections to the furtherance of the undertaking throughout the above whole length, they may be obviated by taking advantage of the river Mahaville-ganga, which after an easterly course from Kandi, for about thirty miles, takes a bend nearly at right angles, and thence runs, in almost a straight line, to Trincomalee harbour. The line of rail might thus,—for the present, at least,—terminate here, and the remainder of the transit be performed by iron steam boats of a light draught on the river; and for the building of which, the Naval depot at Trincomalee would offer every facility. Were this last to be the plan decided on for adoption, (and perhaps under present local circumstances it may prove to be the better of the two,) the length of railway to be constructed from Gallé, would be reduced to about sixty, or seventy miles at the most; this line of transit would save the round of nearly one-half of the island, and passengers for any of the ports in the Bay of Bengal, would, on landing from the Oriental Company's steamers at Gallé, be transferred thence to their port of embarkation, in the short space of from six to seven hours. In the prosecution of such an important public improvement, which, exclusive of the great accommodation to be thereby afforded to the casual passenger, would inevitably, the same as in cases of a similar nature in other countries, prove of incalculable benefit to the island itself, by furnishing employment to the natives, while opening up a safe and commodious highway throughout the interior, a comparative saving of time and expense would result from the adoption of Mr. Prosser's ingenious plan of wooden rails, (prepared according to Mr. Payne's patent process for preserving timber from rot or destructive insects,) and stationary engines along the lines at regular intervals. The great cost of foreign iron wrought at a distance, would thus at once be done away with, while the substituting of the timber, which would be procured for comparatively little or nothing, could be manufactured by native workmen on the spot: tunnels too, and even deep cuttings generally, which are rendered necessary by the use of the locomotive on metal rails, would be avoided; and in all probability, the "Gallé and Trincomalee Railway" would in the course of time become the Grand Trunk line from which

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would branch off a series to all parts, ameliorating the condition of "the people," and thus to ultimately to remodel the face of the country.

While these several internal changes would be in progress, steam navigation to the east coast of Africa, Madagascar, and the Cape of Good Hope, on the one hand, and to the Indian Archipelago, Australia, and New Zealand, on the other, would reward the enterprising speculator, and bring prosperity and wealth to the country.

Having, as I hope, succeeded in pointing out some of the advantages which Ceylon must derive from its central geographical position, I shall pass on to deal similarly with Malta, observing that the transit through Egypt is about to be permanently improved by means of a highway across the desert, in connection with the steam boats already plying upon the river Nile.

Malta then (owing to her being the depot for all steamers direct, between the United Kingdoms and the colonies in the East, and at the same time, the point whence all steam navigation to the other ports of the Mediterranean, is made to radiate at once upon the arrival of mails from either of these quarters,) manifestly occupies as important a place in "the commercial," as she has always done in "the political world;" and it consequently rests with her people, native, as well as resident foreigners, whether she improve in this respect or not. It is in fact, their interest, whether as a community or merely as individuals severally pursuing their various occupations, each with his own pecuniary profit immediately in view, to combine more, with the understanding in common—that their united exertions tend to benefit the whole body, and not merely further to increase the wealth of a few who may already be possessed of more than sufficient to keep them in affluence, while others are in little better than a mendicant condition, though surrounded by almost every variety of the necessaries, and even by the luxuries of life, obtained at a ridiculously cheap rate. Indeed the condition of the lower orders of the Maltese, to whatever cause it is to be traced, appears to be at about as low an ebb, physically and morally, as it is possible for them almost to be reduced to. Affairs cannot always continue in this state; and it would therefore seem to behove those who, by virtue of a superior rank and station in life, exercise lordship over them, to see to it in time, as in such cases, very little trouble and expense in the beginning is found to save a great deal in the end, without taking into account the present evils that are either partially prevented, or wholly neutralized. As in all other places, a great deal, in this sense, lies

in the power of the local press ; to it the public rightfully look, and doubtless they will meet with an adequate response, as there are some evils, or inconsistencies there, as well as elsewhere, which merely require to be duly made known, in order to become at once eradicated. The press, moreover, being the legitimate leader, the censor and exponent of public and private opinion, having assumed a position somewhat above the average in the community whose interests it is its duty to watch over and protect, should, while it takes timely notice, and gives due warning of all that is from time to time taking place in the external world, be no less mindful of domestic details ; without, at the same time, ever suffering itself to be biassed, or led by local considerations, merely because they are such, nor even out of a foolish party spirit of opposition. Let us for a moment compare Protestant Britain with her free press, to her Popish neighbours where the tone and contents of the public journals are regulated (?) by police authority, and where no man dares, without personal risk, to put his thoughts into print, if they be materially contrasted with the present measures of the powers that be ; and then let us ask ourselves, as to what she owes her proud pre-eminence above all other nations of the earth, if it be not to the unexampled freedom of all reasonable expression of opinion, on which her constitutional liberty is based ? The representatives of authority there, as elsewhere, from the lowest to the highest, and from the minister of state down to the humble rank of the policeman, are placed in their respective stations merely for the purpose of acting—of seeing that the laws, which the voice of the people calls for, be strictly obeyed and respected—of seeing, that the majesty of the people be duly recognised—they regulate the working of the system in fact, while they, at the same time, are in their turn regulated thereby also ; and if this be true in one part of the British empire, must it not, in all consistency, be so acknowledged throughout all the several integral parts of that empire ? Most assuredly it must, despite of all that can be—not SAID, for few will be found to speak to the contrary—but, despite of all that can be involuntarily DONE to coerce the press. Circumstances—the having followed out a series of bad—or, which is the same thing only differently expressed, arbitrary measures, for instance—may at times make it appear, to the party or parties in power, that some slight degree of restraint is necessary ; but selfishness, at the least, is as sure of being proved to be the motive by which they are actuated ; for with a due regard to their own official dignity, they are afraid that those over whom they rule, may be made somewhat discontented—or disaffected, as the current phrase is, on learning precisely how

much of the regal farce has in their case been performed. And they perhaps, as individual members of the community, are not so much to be censured, as the press that cringes, from whatever contrary, or other motive, with all servility, or mistaken humility, to the will of official personages whom it knows and sees to be in error. Such a state of things is usually found to mark a crisis; and when a reverse of circumstances comes about, the minds of men, as they naturally will, recover themselves with a rebound, and ultimately lose all respect for that which they previously regarded with undue or obsequious deference. It becomes the press therefore to maintain its ground by raising its voice; and while advocating the cause of the people, the individuals immediately concerned in so doing will find, that so far from their having lost sight of their own personal interests in the meanwhile, they will have been advancing in prosperity, and laying the foundation of that which it is out of the power of any who unworthily would deprive them of; and for this reason, that in seeking to obtain—as it proves to be in most cases—only a tacit admission of the social rights and equality of all members indiscriminately in the community, they have been fighting in their own cause, and doing for others precisely that which they could wish others to do for them.

To return, however, to the subject more immediately in hand, we may, as I think will be generally admitted, calculate upon it as a certainty, that the island of Malta will continue to be within eleven days' distance, at most, of Great Britain, so long as the United Kingdom maintains her empire on the ocean; and this state of things a very few years have proved sufficient to enable enterprise and industry, when ably and judiciously directed, to accomplish; but it may not be improbable that, should peace continue to reign throughout Europe, or even if war were to break out, (as, from the nature of recent improvements made in the art of destruction, we may reasonably enough suppose that its duration cannot possibly be of similar duration to that in times past; besides which, the events of each succeeding month, as it rolls over, tends only the more and more to convince all civilized people that peace is the true policy of nations,) a much shorter space of time will be required to bring Malta within only four days and a half, or, at farthest, within five days' distance of London. I shall adopt the plan of designating the "distances" by the time to be occupied in the transit, as it will, I think, the better serve to avoid confusion, or rather, misapprehension, where the different rates of speed attainable by steam on land and sea respectively, are to be understood as being reduced to the one, or equalized, for the sake of present convenience.

The average time between Malta and Alexandria and the coast of Syria, is, say, four days or ninety-six hours, (though this perhaps is somewhat more than the reality,) as nearly as possible equal to that between Malta and Gibraltar; thus Malta is manifestly the middle point between the two extremes of the Mediterranean. From Malta to London, again—(the focus of the political and commercial world)—at present occupies, on the average, seven days, or one hundred and sixty-eight hours, so that her position in this point of view may not appear to hold good exactly. However, the French railroads—(the 'Paris and Calais' and the 'Paris and Lyons' lines, which are in a rapidly progressive state)—will partially rectify this; and if there be a continuation of the rails from Lyons to Marseilles, (and which there is but little doubt of their being made in due time, when once the other two lines are finished,) one continuous line from Marseilles will be available, in length between ten and eleven hundred miles, which is equal to, say, two days or forty-eight hours, at the rate of only twenty-five miles per hour. The whole time of transit of intelligence between Malta and London, would thus at once be reduced from seven to five days, on an average; but, most likely special or swift trains would be started on these important occasions, which would accomplish the distance several hours earlier—say, at the rate of twenty-eight, instead of twenty-five miles per hour, and the whole time occupied between Calais and Marseilles becomes no more than thirty-eight or thirty-nine hours; in addition to this, were iron steamers, similar to "the Iron Duke," which at present carries the mails on the Dublin and Liverpool line, substituted for those which are seventy hours, or three days between Malta and the port of Marseilles, they would reduce the time at sea to about two days and a half or sixty-one hours, on an average; and thus would a reduction of about seventy hours on the whole time, as at present, bring Malta within about the same distance of London as she now is of Alexandria. This would be the line of "Latest intelligence between the United Kingdom, Malta, and the East;" while the direct water communication by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's vessels will continue to be the route of the majority of the passengers with whom the remaining in England till the latest day is a matter of no consequence; to include the transfer of merchandise would perhaps be useless, as heavy packages always take the cheapest mode of conveyance; whereas, in the case of passengers and news, expense becomes a secondary consideration. Independent of the above comparatively circumscribed view, though by no means the less surely connected therewith by the results or effect produced, this island is made the head quarters

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of all the foreign steamers whose traffic in any respect may be worthy of a second thought, in a proportionately greater or less degree, for they each have their several depots established here, and in return they contribute to keep up a communication between Malta and those neighbouring foreign ports to which at present no British steamers run regularly.*

If, again, we take our Eastern Colonies, &c. more immediately into the account, there will seem to be but little room to doubt that the line of communication to which I have just referred will in time be proved to be a circuitous one; for if the railways which are already in operation, and those others which are now being only projected, by the several different companies respectively, on the continent, be once united between the ports of Ostend and Trieste, the line of transit thus laid, and continued from the latter point by steamers down the Adriatic to the island of Corfu, and the port of Alexandria, will be as direct a one as can be shewn, in this sense, on the map of Europe; and therefore it may not perhaps be beyond the bounds of probability that in the sequence of time, Corfu will, in some respects, become the rival of Malta as a central point, whence the latest intelligence from both the east and west extremities of the commercial world will be diffused throughout all the countries whose shores are washed by the waters of the Mediterranean Sea. Nevertheless, the latter appears, under existing circumstances, to be as certain of continuing to be the commercial depot for steamers generally.

The two lines of direct communication between the United Kingdoms and Alexandria—that, via Marseilles and Malta, and that via Trieste and Corfu—will join in with each other off the western extremity of Candia, where perhaps, in a few years, policy will point out the eligibility of the plan of a British settlement being established, until eventually, the whole, or greater part of an island, whose situation enables it to command the approaches to Greece, the Archipelago, Turkey, and the countries bordering on the Black Sea; and in the climate of which, all the necessaries, and all the luxuries of life, from the produce of the torrid to that of the frigid zones, find a temperature suitable to their, almost spontaneous growth,—may be brought peaceably under the all-protecting flag of the British Empire; and thus would one of the fairest portions of the earth be rescued from the curse of despotism and heathenism, to grace, as another

* There is a map published by Augustine Logerot, No. 55, Quai des Augustins, Paris, shewing all the railroads in Europe and the lines of steamers in the Mediterranean, a glance at which will be sufficient to convey a general idea; and the more readily if the universal term, *lines of steam*, be mentally substituted for 'railroads' and 'steamboats' while perusing the foregoing pages.

rich jewel, the diadem of a Christian queen, the sway of whose sceptre recognises not the setting of the sun.

We may, for the present, regard Gibraltar as being the medium point between the United Kingdom and the West Coast of Africa, steam having been already introduced in that quarter through the medium of war steamers, whose attention, as far as their crews are concerned, is turned chiefly, if not solely, to the acquirement of prize-money, though the ships themselves are meanwhile performing a far higher and nobler service, by annihilating the traffic in slaves, which is the first step towards the advancement of civilization in that quarter, and causing a more speedy and regular communication to be maintained between all those ports respectively, which are but thinly scattered along that, to Europeans, at least, ill-favoured shore. Those vessels, like those in the Mediterranean Sea, may, under present circumstances, be considered as the vehicles for the conveyance of intelligence merely, as armed mail-boats, and such is the best service on which it is possible to employ them; as whenever the interests of the service to which they may be said more immediately to belong, will admit of its being put in practice, the instruments of warfare should necessarily, and as far as may be possible, invariably be rendered subservient to the nobler arts of peace.

Thus far, of the United Kingdom as the centre of steam communication,—and I trust I have in some measure succeeded in elucidating my subject, as I at first proposed,—I cannot, however, conclude this brief epistle, without making an attempt to direct the imagination by means of ‘a formula’—if I may so term it—to that state of things which more nearly concerns us, natives of, or residents in these countries; and this I shall the more readily undertake to do from an impression, that having perused thus far you run no risk of losing much time by continuing to the end. In conclusion then, I shall observe, that these kingdoms, as I have already shewn, form the nucleus of the world in every sense—the converging point of nations, as well as the radiating point of Christianity and civilization. Let us, however, for present purposes, leave Great Britain to take care of herself (as she is well able to do), and regarding the Isle of Man as the focal point for the imaginations of individuals generally, as it is in fact that of the United Kingdoms in the geographical sense (see “Hope for the Irish”), turn our attention to that which may possibly more especially concern us as Irishmen.

We take, then, the city of Dublin—the principal port for communication with the rest of the empire—as the *Irish* centre of the United Kingdoms, and which will, in the course of a few years, be no more than three or four hours distance from Athlone—

the central town of Ireland—and therefore (if we will for a moment so imagine it) the radiating point for all the principal lines of railway which will be made to connect the respective ports on opposite parts of our coast.* Possibly, if not probably, many may say—that if there be such an imaginary thing as a central or converging point for our railroads that are, or rather that are to be, Dublin, and not Athlone, is the spot; be it so, therefore, for it is so as regards communication with the sister isle; but let us, upon the present occasion, suppose it not to be so, and determine in favour of Athlone—the important position of which otherwise inconsiderable town is duly appreciated by the British Government of the present day, as it has always been by former ones. Of course it is impossible to guess exactly as to what the state of these matters will be after a lapse of years; nevertheless but little doubt can exist, that the condition of Athlone and the country round about it will be materially improved before long, for it will, when the improvements on the river Shannon below it shall have been completed, have free communication with the ocean, and, compared with what it is now, become in some measure a seaport, possessing the while all the advantages of an inland town lying half way between the principal ports on the east and west coasts (Dublin and Galway, for instance), as also between those of the north and south (Londonderry and Cork). I take this view of the case, because the several lines of railway may readily be considered as the chief means merely, by which internal physical improvement and commerce are eventually to be facilitated and perfected; but there are also to be considered all the other maritime towns from which railways are being projected inland, which must be included in the whole account, and thus probably tend to make my hypothesis appear proportionably the more reasonable, or less unreasonable, as it may be; nor is it, I hope, to be regarded as improbable, that a very few years will suffice to place Ireland more upon an equality, in these respects, with her hitherto more favoured neighbours, by realizing a portion of this benefit, which at present this country's friends(?) and foreign acquaintances may regard in so far a favourable light as to pronounce it—"the extravagance of a diseased imagination only, without an accompanying intention on the part of the writer to divert or mislead the reader." Come what may, however,—“Erin go bragh!” say I.

* See the *Irish Railway Gazette* Map of Ireland, on which are accurately shewn, all the line^s of railway completed and in progress.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

HOPE FOR THE IRISH,

IN THE

FUTURE PROSPECTS OF YOUNG, OR CHRISTIAN IRELAND.

May be had of the Publisher.

ND.